

Buddy's Blighty

Jack Turner



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BUDDY'S BLIGHTY
AND OTHER VERSES
FROM THE TRENCHES



LIEUTENANT JACK TURNER, M. C.

Canadian Expeditionary Force

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BY
LIEUTENANT JACK TURNER, M.C.
Canadian Expeditionary Force



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DEDICATION AND APOLOGY

TO YOURSELF

"I often wonder what the vintners buy
One half so precious as the stuff they sell"—
So marvelled he, who sang of love and wine,
Of life and death, of Heaven and of Hell.
And now he lies at peace, nor sings at all,
In that fair garden where the rose-leaves fall.

So, as I sit and scatter ink and try
These weak and wandering verses to indite,
I often wonder what the rhymesters know
One half so foolish as the stuff they write;
But still I scrawl — the Lord above knows why
One who knows nought of poetry should try.

But, 'cross in Flanders, when the rain was cold,
The trenches muddy and the Germans rough,
To keep from feeling sorry for myself
I took to spoiling paper with this stuff;
It helped me pass a dismal hour or two —
I only hope 'twill do the same for you.

J. T.

St. John's, Newfoundland,
October, 1917.

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BUDDY'S BLIGHTY
AND OTHER VERSES
FROM THE TRENCHES

BUDDY'S BLIGHTY

Buddy Baldwin, Broncho-Buster, used to ride the
range a heap,

He looked at things in terms of cows, and always
held that sheep —

And sheep-men, too — were vermin, that they
counted mighty low

And, compared with cows and cow-men, why,
they didn't even show.

(This has no bearing on my tale — I only tell
it 'cos

It gives you some idea of the kind of guy Bud
was.)

Cow-man first, last and all the time — Bud's
Bible was the book

Where breeds and brands were registered, and
Buddy always took

The view that walking is no way of covering the
ground,

And riding is the only way to navigate around.

If you want to picture Buddy, bear in mind these
little things —

BUDDY'S BLIGHTY

Imagine him as built of wire and highly tempered
springs —
With the little, deep-carved wrinkles 'round the
corners of his eyes
That are brands of open country and unbounded
space and skies —
Six feet high, brown as an Injun — leaner than
the law allows,
And his deepest interests poker, brands, range,
cayuses and cows.

Now, Buddy, he was range-boss for the Diamond
Curly O,
(Down beside the Rio waters, where the spiky
cactus grow)
It chanced the Diamond Curly O sold quite a
good-sized bunch
Of horses to an English mob, then Buddy took a
hunch,
And signed to act as valet to those horses on the
boat,
(Though the thought of so much water pretty
nearly got his goat).
When he got his high heels planted good and firm
on English ground,

BUDDY'S BLIGHTY

He thought he'd step across to France and have a
look around,
So he blew his roll in London, in a gorgeous jam-
boree,
And then settled down to soldier with the Canuck
Infantree.

Now, I first ran into Buddy in an Hospital in
Kent,
Where a bunch of Army Doctor-guys had sent me
to repent
Of the foolishness of stopping German shrapnel
with my head —
There I found old Buddy Baldwin holding down
the nearest bed.
Well, I told him all my sorrows and he told me
all his woes
(And what was lies and what was truth, I guess,
God only knows),
And Bud told me all about his trip to Blighty from
the line,
(He was sure a fluent liar and he made it listen
fine),
Though I'm much inclined to doubt it, maybe
one per cent. is true,

BUDDY'S BLIGHTY

But it sounded quite convincing, so I'll hand it out to you.

" We was jammed up in the Salient, and she was some swell hole,

" With the trenches all as shallow as a tin-horn gambler's soul —

" An' the mud as deep as blazes, an' the Huns a-raisin' hell —

" I'd seen some rotten holes before, but that one rung the bell.

" Oh, she sure was good and lively — in a quiet kind of way.

" With the guns a-poundin', poundin', poundin', poundin', night and day;

" Then some chesty Hun commander thought he'd start a little fuss

" Just to boost his reputation — and he started in on us.

" Yep, he thought he'd rise the Canucks, just to boost his name a bit —

" Did he help his reputation? — there was nothing left of it

" When that little game was finished and we reckoned up the score,

BUDDY'S BLIGHTY

“ I don't think he'll go a-gunnin' for the Canucks
any more.”

“ Me? I cashed in kind o' early-like, and this is
how it come —

“ 'Twas the second merry evenin', and they sure
was shellin' some —

“ The air was full of concentrated hell and flyin'
steel,

“ An' the way things kept a-movin' kind o' made
a fellow feel

“ Pretty sure he'd go to Heaven by the high ex-
plosive route,

“ For old Fritz was workin' everything that could
be made to shoot.

“ Well, I just had got to feelin' that I didn't give
a damn

“ How blamed soon they quit their foolin', when
there came an awful slam,

“ An' a dozen locoed earthquakes, an' a lunatic
typhoon

“ Was a-messin' up the quiet of that pleasant aft-
ernoon.

“ The old earth bucked like a broncho and jumped
up to touch the sun,

BUDDY'S BLIGHTY

- “ Then she split into a million stars, an’ I was
ridin’ one ;
- “ An’ a nine-point-two came rampin’ up, a-pawin’
up the ground
- “ With a Broncho-Buster, chapped and spurred,
a-ridin’ him around,
- “ An’ he says to me,—‘ Say, Buddy, ’spose we go
out on the prowl,
- “ Let’s go an’ see the elephant and listen to the
owl,’
- “ So I clumb up there behind him, on his lopin’
nine-point-two,
- “ An’ we rambled thro’ a mesa where the cactus
was all blue,
- “ Till his broncho started buckin’ an’ he piled me
good an’ high,
- “ An’ I met a gallowampus bird a-roostin’ in the
sky.
- “ He had fourteen wings an seven eyes an’ whis-
kers on his ears,
- “ An’ he chased me all around the range for
seven thousand years,
- “ Till I ran into a gopher hole and met a grizzly
bear
- “ A-chattin’ with a rattlesnake, beneath a prickly
pear.

BUDDY'S BLIGHTY

“ That there unconverted insect was a-smokin’ a
cigar,

“ An’ I says — ‘ Say, Mr. Rattler, can you tell
me where we are? ’

“ ‘ Sure,’ says he, ‘ as sure as shootin’,’ but before
he got half done

“ I see a bunch of timber wolves a-comin’ on the
run.

“ An’ says one to me, ‘ We know you, ’taint
no use for you to speak,

“ ‘ You’re the guy that rode for Sage Brush Sam,
on Little Chulu Creek,’

“ Then he winked at me most knowin’, an’ he
wagged his bushy tail,

“ An’ he turned himself clean inside out an’ trot-
ted up the trail.

“ While I stood there, dumb and helpless — I
was too darned ’mazed to think —

“ A pale pink moon came swimmin’ thro’ a sea of
blue-black ink,

“ A-huntin’ for a baby-wolf, branded X circle Y,

“ An’ I felt so sorry for that moon I started in
to cry,

“ The salt tears they kept fallin’ till the flood
reached to my chest,

BUDDY'S BLIGHTY

- “ Then I see a big black nigger in an armour-plated vest,
“ With two guns hangin’ at his belt, come wadin’ through the flood,
“ An’ he says,—‘ I’m kind o’ lost ’round here, now could you tell me, Bud,
“ ‘ If steers is fifty on the hoof, an’ whiskey two bits per,
“ ‘ How far would you allow it is to Coquahallus Spur? ’
“ So I figured, an’ I figured, but I couldn’t make it right,
“ An’ that coon, he started shrinkin’ till he shrunk plumb out of sight.
- “ But his guns they swelled an’ bloated, like a cow-hide in the wet,
“ ’Til they grew to twelve-inch howitzers, all loaded up an’ set
“ A-pointin’ right square at me, an’ I couldn’t bat an eye,
“ Then a lizard, wearin’ leather chaps, perambulated by,
“ He nods to me most friendly, an’ then, ‘ Buddy, Boy,’ says he,

BUDDY'S BLIGHTY

- “ ‘ I met a pal of yours last week, they call him
Pat McGhee,
“ ‘ An’ he asked me, if I saw you, just to tell you
he was well ’ —
“ Then he yanked the firin’ lever, an’ I gave an
awful yell.
“ I didn’t hear the gun go off — I didn’t feel no
jar,
“ But I felt myself a-fallin’, faster than a shootin’
star,
“ Through a million, million, million, million
miles of fleecy clouds,
“ An’ it seemed that there was people all around
me there in crowds,

“ All a-whisperin’ an’ a-talkin’. Then I felt
almighty sure
“ I’d be stoppin’ pretty sudden if I fell a little
more,
“ An’ I felt a hundred different aches an’ forty
kinds of pain,
“ An’ those people were a-talkin’, I could hear
’em good an’ plain.
“ An’ says one, ‘ Why, just look, Doctor, I believe
he’s comin’ to,’

BUDDY'S BLIGHTY

“ Another says, ‘ Yes, so he is, I guess we’ll pull him through.’ ”

“ Then I takes a look around me, an’ what *do* you think I see? ”

“ Just three nurses an’ a doctor, standin’ lookin’ down at me,

“ I had splints an’ pads, and bandages wherever they would fit,

“ I was perforated proper, but I didn’t care a bit,

“ For I knew I’d said a long good-bye to bombs an’ shells an’ mud

“ An’ was safe in bed in Blighty — an’ that’s good enough for Bud.”

NOTE:—“Diamond Curly-O” brand, is the letter Q (called curly O) inscribed in a diamond.

“Seeing the elephant and hearing the owl” is the South-Western term for going on a big time.

THE RAG-TIME ARMY

They call us the Rag-time Army, and maybe
they've named us right,
Our drill may be kind of ragged — but say, have
you seen us fight?
For drilling is only drilling, but fighting's a good
man's game,
And a scrap with the Rag-time Army has never
been voted tame.
We're kind of a hybrid outfit — we're soldiers
and civies, too —
Just civies dressed up in khaki, determined to see
things through
Till the Kaiser is trimmed to a finish and Fritzzy
has jumped the ring;
Though we may not scrap by the book of rules
And at fancy drilling we're plain damned fools,
We can put up a fine performance when it comes
to the real thing.

THE RAG-TIME ARMY

Considering us as soldiers, we're only an empty
bluff,

We look like a bunch of dummies when we get on
the "Slope Arms" stuff;

Our dressing is something awful — our "fours"
run from two to six,

We can't even change direction without an in-
fernal mix.

But our shooting is not so rotten and we know
what a bomb is for,

They say we're not bad with the bayonet, though
our drill is so awful poor,

And Fritz doesn't love the Canucks, and I think
that's the safest test;

We drag on the march like a flock of sheep

Our discipline makes all the Brass Hats
weep,

But the sloppy old Rag-time Army goes "over the
top" with the best.

We're Doctors, and Farmers, and Lawyers, and
Cowboys and City Clerks,

The Office-Boy is a Sergeant, and the fellow that
owned the works

Is a beautiful big buck private, who jumps at the
Sergeant's word,

THE RAG-TIME ARMY

And the boss of a ranch takes orders from the
fellow that tended herd.

We're Bankers, and Brokers, and Butchers, we're
Confidence-men, and Cooks,

We're the fellows that dig the ditches, we're the
fellows that keep the books,

We're the men of the Pick and Shovel, we're the
men of the brush and pen;

From the shovel-stiff to the Millionaire,

If you're looking for them, you'll find them
here—

In the ranks of the Rag-time Army they count,
one and all, as men.

We heard in the far, faint distance the sound of
a world at war

And we jumped our jobs and came crowding to
the call of the cannon's roar;

From city, and town, and homestead, from cabin,
and camp, and mine,

From the wash of the warm Pacific and the ice of
the Arctic line.

And battle to us meant nothing, and war was a
thing unknown,

But, somewhere, deep in our being, far deeper
than blood or bone,

THE RAG-TIME ARMY

Spoke the voice of the old gray Mother, Who
rules from Her Island Throne,
“In a world of war will my sons abide,
“In peace, or fight at the Mother’s side?
“Answer, Blood of the Mother’s Blood, and
Bone of the Mother’s Bone.”

Then the little old Rag-time Army rose up at the
Mother’s call,
And the little old Rag-time Army has learned
how to fight, and fall,
And the little old Rag-time Army is doing its little
bit,
And the Huns know the Rag-time Army, and
they’re not very fond of it.
There are little white crosses marking the beds
where the Canucks lie —
(For drilling is only drilling — can drill teach a
man to die?)
But, when we come to the finish, to the close of
the Hun’s great “Day”
When we’ve smashed the Hun on the Western
Line,
When our shells are screaming across the
Rhine,
You’ll find the old Rag-time Army at work in its
own old way.

THE AEROPLANE

There's a speck afloat in the distant sky,
It wheels and whirls like a hawk a-wing,
In the blue, arched vault, where the bright birds
fly,
And 'round it, forming a fairy ring,
The white puffs blossom, the white puffs bloom
Like magic flowers; then fade away,
As the snow that falls in the winter's gloom
Fades in the sun of a summer day.

There's death and doom in that soaring speck
Yes, doom and death are a-floating there,
For the great guns swing to the call and beck
Of the men who traverse the upper air,
And that soaring speck is the great gun's eyes,
(For the great guns, left to themselves, are
blind,)
So the plane that scours the empty skies
Is brain and eyes of the guns behind.

The white puffs blossom and bloom and grow,
And death lies hid in their fleecy hearts,

THE AEROPLANE

Wheeling, whirling, now high, now low,
With the wild birds' wiles and the air-man's arts,
The plane 'scapes death by a scanty yard,
For the lesser guns, they are out to blind,
(And they're shooting steady and strong and
hard)

The eyes of the mightier guns behind.

There's a man aloft in the soaring plane,
And his word is law to the guns below
That boom and batter to clear the lane —
The lane where the gleaming bayonets go.
The great guns swing to his lightest word,
The shells scream out at his slightest sign,
And death's controlled by a man-made bird,
And a bird-like man, o'er the German line.

Strong steel muscles and silken wings,
Screws and wires and wooden rods,
High-strung engine that purrs and sings,
And men a-wing on the wind, like gods —
And the heart of all is the heart of him
Who dares the deserts of air alone,
And — god-like — poised on the ether's rim,
Guides death's grim hand from his lofty throne.

THE LUCKY DUG-OUT

She ain't no Carlton or Ritz Hotel,
She ain't no Villa de Luxe,
She's damp as blazes, an' leaks as well,
An' you don't have to look at her twice to tell
That her roof don't amount to shucks.

She ain't equipped with no spacious hall,
She don't much attract the eye at all,
She's seven short feet by five, that's all,
(She'll hold three men, if they're fairly small),
An' her roof's just three feet high.

She's built of sandbags, an' sticks, an' clay,
An' galvanized iron, too,
She's semi-detached, in a kind of way —
Fritz dropped a Sausage the other day
An' the dug-out next door — na poo.

She's low, an' leaky, an' far from clean,
An' muddy, an' wet — what's more,
It's mighty wise to keep down your bean,

THE LUCKY DUG-OUT

'Cause it's dimes to doughnuts that you'll be seen
If you loiter around the door.

Her bathroom's a tin in the trench outside,
Her kitchen's a can of coke,
But the kitchen's closed, as, last time we tried,
To cook a lunch in the bright noontide,
Old Fritz threw things at the smoke.

The people living across the way,
Are an awful unfriendly lot —
They like, at the end of a perfect day,
To shove some shrapnel across the bay,
An' make it unholy hot.

But, rats to the leaks an' mud an' the rain,
An' bother the dirt an' the wet —
Though Fritz may shell us with might an'
 main,
An' — goldarn his eyes, here he comes again —
He hasn't quite hit us yet.

An' let her leak in the good old way —
It don't worry us a bit —
Let Fritz keep pounding us night and day,
We're cached away in a corner bay,
Where we're damnably hard to hit.

“ YELLOW ”

'Twas in Folkestone that they named him, in a
crowded bar one night,
When a fellow called him something that would
make a rabbit fight,
An' he took that red-raw fightin' word, that no
man ought to stand,
Just a-grinnin' kind of foolish — and he never
raised a hand.

Then they re-baptized him “ Yellow,” 'cause he'd
showed a yellow streak,
Wider than the Western Ocean, longer than a
long, wet week;
It's a rotten brand to carry, but he didn't seem
to care,
So the name stuck hard in England, while we did
our trainin' there.

An' he brought it out here with him, where he
lived up to it right —

“ YELLOW ”

Say, I'd never thought to meet a guy so devil-rode
with fright —
He'd duck each ramblin' bullet that come near
enough to hear,
An' he'd pass the low spots runnin', like a crazy
white-tailed-deer.

When he heard a shell a-comin', why he'd almost
throw a fit,
An' he'd turn 'bout two shades paler every time
a 'Sausage' lit;
Yep, he sure was some rip-snorter at the 'Death
or Glory' game,
'Yellow' — that was what we called him, an' he
lived up to his name.

Well, the word came down the ditches that 'twas
time for Fritz to hike,
An' that we were goin' over first to see what
things were like:
Then the guns they got a-goin' an' most every
kind of shell
That a fellow ever dreamed about was givin'
Fritzy hell.

“YELLOW”

We were waitin' in the trenches for the guns to
clear the way

An' old Yellow, he was standin' right beside me
in the bay;

You could tell, just lookin' at him, that his nerves
were shot to scraps —

He was foolin' with his rifle — he kept pickin'
at his straps,

With his fingers kind o' twitchy, an' his face all
soaked with sweat —

Judgin' by the way he acted, 'twas a pretty healthy
bet,

That his heart was sayin' “stick it,” while his
heels yelled “run away” —

It's a mighty mean sensation, an' *I know* — I've
felt that way.

Then the whistle screamed “get over,” an' the
guns all seemed to stop,

An' next minute we was swarmin', hell for
leather, 'cross the top;

It was sure no bloomin' joy-ride, tho' the guns had
done their best,

(But, then, guns are only engines, it takes men
to do the rest.)

“YELLOW”

They'd made hay of Fritz's wire an' messed up
his trench a lot,
But they missed a few machine guns, an' they
slipped it to us hot,
Half way 'cross, old Yellow tumbled, an' he lay
there like a log,
An' a fellow, runnin' next him, yelled, “Get up,
you yellow dog.

“Call yourself a blasted Canuck, an' let Heinie
get your goat —”
Then he went down, chokin' awful with a bullet
in his throat.
But old Yellow got up runnin'—p'raps 'twas
what that fellow said,
Or the way he stopped that bullet, started Yellow
seein' red.

Well, we left a lot of fellows lyin' quiet in the
dirt —
For, with Fritz's Maxims workin', someone's
certain to get hurt —
But the Lord still loves the Irish, an' I hadn't got
a scratch
When we mixed it up with Fritz in a bomb an'
bayonet match.

“YELLOW”

We cleaned up the trenches proper, an' we settled down to stick,
But old Fritz's guns got goin' an' they nearly turned the trick,
With a big barrage behind us, so our second wave got stuck
An' it seemed, for some long minutes, we were sadly out of luck.

'Cos there wasn't many of us — just small bunches here an' there —
An' the heavy Hun trench-mortars were a-pound-in' us for fair,
Then they started in to rush us, an' things sure were lookin' bad,
But we stopped 'em, good an' solid, though it took 'bout all we had.

'Twas a cinch we'd reached the finish of our merry morning's sport,
With our ammunition scanty an' our bombs almighty short;
With a “thin, red line” formation that was mostly gaps an' holes —
The time seemed right for startin' in to doctor up our souls.

“ YELLOW ”

Me an' Yellow were together in a badly-battered
bay,
With the nearest fellows to us, maybe, twenty
yards away;
When we saw the gray-green uniforms come
toilin' up once more,
I can just remember thinkin' that we'd reached
our limit, sure,

When a chunk of shrapnel got me on the head, an'
laid me out,
'Fore I had a chance to figure what the fuss was
all about;
'Twasn't very many minutes till I came to life
again,
An' I saw old Yellow scrappin', like a dozen
crazy men.

He'd no time to think of loadin', an' his bayonet
was a stub,
But the butt of his Lee-Enfield made a mighty
handy club,
I saw one big Hun go over with a caved-in skull,
an' then —
The world went 'round in circles an' I went to
sleep again.

“ YELLOW ”

That's the story, as I saw it — here's the rest, it's
second hand —

Our second wave got over just as Fritz broke
down our stand, ·

Cleaned up three lines with the bayonet in a very
decent style,

Then our other waves got busy and drove Fritz
back 'most a mile.

Well, they found me in a mud-hole with a badly
damaged dome,

(One inch lower would have sent me to my happy
Heavenly home),

An' they found old Yellow lyin' sprawled out on
the trenches' rim,

Grippin' hard a broken rifle, with a dozen holes
in him.

Then they chucked me on a stretcher an' they
sent me to the rear

For the Red Cross men to play with — but, they
buried Yellow there.

This is just a simple story of a man who was
my friend,

Who was nearly mad with terror, but who stuck
it to the end,

“ YELLOW ”

Any man may sport a medal, if he has a little
luck,

But, my hat is off to Yellow, who was sick, an'
scared,— an' *stuck*.

“IT SOUNDS TO ME”

'Way West, where the prairies stretch far and
free

Till they fade in the sun's hot blaze,
Where the cowboys follow the drifting herds,
Through the land of the unmarked ways;
Where life's lived close to the edge of things,
And living is less complex
Than in lands controlled by the reckless hands
Of what's known as the weaker sex;
Where chaps and Stetsons are evening dress
And collars and ties are banned,
Where auction bridge is a game unknown,
And there's just five cards in a hand;
Where wealth is reckoned in heads of stock,
And thousands of herds range free —
They've got an expression that's mighty good,
We'd use it, too, if we understood
What they mean by “it *sounds* to me.”

Suppose you're down in the cattle lands
And you meet with a guy some night,

“IT SOUNDS TO ME”

Who's full of the juice of the joyous grape —
Plumb loaded with booze and fight.
You greet him first in a friendly way —
At least, if you're wise, you do —
Then, suppose he, lifting his voice in song,
Unburdens his soul to you —
“I'm an old gray wolf from the poison plains,
Where the coyotes lurk and prowl,
“I'm a hootin', shootin' son of a gun,
And this is my night to howl.”
Don't say, “Forget it, you drunken boob,
You're too full of booze to see” —
That might mean shootin' and sudden death,
Don't get to talkin', just save your breath,
And murmur: “It *sounds* to me.”

Or, our leading citizen, Deacon Jones,
We'll say, owes you fifty bucks,
That you lent him once on his empty word —
And his word don't amount to shucks —
Well, you've tried your best to collect that bill,
But the Deacon he won't kick through,
Then, s'pose you run into a pal some night,
Who discourses like this to you —
“As a model of virtue and honest worth,
Old Jones is the real thing,

“ IT SOUNDS TO ME ”

“ His word’s his bond, he’s as true as steel
And as straight as a yard of string.”
Your pal may think he’s as right as rain,
No matter how wrong he be,
Don’t tell the tale of your fifty bucks,
But just look weary, and murmur: “ Shucks ”
“ P’raps so — but — it *sounds* to me.”

Out here where we copy the boring worm,
And live like the festive mole,
Where our streets are trenches knee-deep in mud
And home is a sandbagged hole;
Sometimes — not often — you’ll meet a guy,
Whose vision is tinged with blue,
And he’ll say — “ The Huns made a drive at X
And they’ve pretty near broken through;
“ We’ve lost ten guns and a lot of men —
God knows where the thing will end.
“ For the Huns are getting the upper hand.”
Just tell him: “ My cheerful friend,
“ I love the sight of your beaming face,
And your bright sunny smile, but,— gee! —
“ Go somewhere else with your sad, sweet song,
“ You may be right, but I think you’re wrong,
“ And, straight now — ‘ it *sounds* to me.’ ”

“IT SOUNDS TO ME”

When the German press gets a-going good
And, dreaming an inky dream,
Bragg big of the cowardly British fleet
That, according to them, 'twould seem,
Daren't show a nose in the open seas,
But sulks in its guarded holes,
While the German ships sweep the seven seas,
And cruise to the farthest poles,
In search of a foe that they fail to find,—
Just figure it out this way:
Fritz says his navy is after ours,
And hunting it night and day,
But a German ship is a d——d rare bird
In the wash of the old North Sea;
Though German journalists rant and rave
Of a German fleet on the rolling wave,
It sounds — well, “it *sounds* to me.”

When Fritz starts trying to get our goats,
By bragging of “Kultur's Might,”
Of “hammer blows” and of “breaking
through”
And the “Triumphs of German Right,”
Why, let him rave and amuse himself,
And it doesn't hurt us a bit,

“ IT SOUNDS TO ME ”

For we've got a kind of “ Kultur,” too,
Though we don't make a brag of it —
And it doesn't stand for a conquered world
'Neath the heel of a German's rule,
And it doesn't stand for a world imbued,
With the doctrines of Kultur's school,
But a world unshadowed by dread of war,
For a world that is safe and free.
So, Fritz, old boy, you may rave and rant,
And brag and bluster — but win, you can't,
So, really — “ it *sounds* to me.”

ODE TO MACCONACHIE

My weary spirit, like a storm-swept pine,
Is bowed beneath the weight of trouble's load,
Nor sun, nor moon, nor pitying star doth shine,
To ease the darkness of my cheerless road.
To all the woes that harass and appall,
That crush my heart and fill my soul with pain,
Is added one, more deep and dark than all —
We've got MacConachies for lunch again.

Here, where we've made our home, the rain falls
cold,
The mud is unbelievably deep,
The "Whiz-Bang" whizzes, as in days of old,
The crumping "Crump" disturbs our easeful
sleep,
All these be minor ills — we've learned to laugh
At screaming shells, and cold, and driving rain,
But none among us can forbear to strafe,
When we must eat MacConachies again.

ODE TO MACCONACHIE

Friend Fritz's "Heavies" fill the air with noise,
And breach the parapet that was our pride,
"Rum Jars" and "Sausages," and kindred toys,
Fall thick around the dug-outs where we hide,
The snipers snipe ferociously and free,
The Maxims spray us with their iron rain —
We could stick these things with a grin, maybe,
But — we must eat MacConachies again.

Accursed can of thrice accursed food:
Oh, "M. & V." when shall we have release,
From thy meat, murphys, beans and carrots,
 stewed
And buried deep in hecatombs of grease?
Some men there are, 'tis said, who, with their
 teeth,
Dig deep their graves — I fear 'twill be my doom
To have inscribed upon my funeral wreath,
"With his can-opener he built his tomb."

Oh, ye; whose caps are splashed with red and gold,
To whom the art of war is A.B.C.,
Let not our cry of anguish leave you cold,
But lend attentive ear unto our plea.
We'll gladly bear war's horrors — Number Nines,

ODE TO MACCONACHIE

Physical jerks, fatigues, and first F. P.,
“ Whiz-Bangs ” and “ Sausages,” grenades and
 mines,
If only you will strafe MacConachie.

BILL

Bill, the Bomber, is down in the mud,
Shot to pieces and bleeding fast,
He played his cards in the game of games,
But he's come to the end of his stack at last;
He bet on his cards for all they were worth,
Now his last check's up on a losing hand,
And he's cashing in at the game's grim end,
In the shell-swept reaches of No-Man's-Land.

Bill came down from the frozen North,
From the lonely land where the corpse-lights
glow,
Spurred and stung by the tales of war
That filtered in from the land below;
Tales of torture and filthy lust,
Tales of horror and deeds of shame,
Till he left his claim and his trapping line
To take a hand in the greatest game.

His mukluks and parka are cached away,
And they've dressed him up in a khaki suit,

BILL

They've taught him to see with a soldier's eye,
They've taught him to drill, and to march, and
shoot;
He, who had shot that he might not starve,
He, who had run with the dogs all day,
Learned to shoot as a soldier shoots,
Learned to march in a soldier's way.

They took him over across the sea,
And set him down in a ravished land,
Where the trenches twine through the war-tilled
fields,
And the Hun is held in an iron band;
Doing his bit with his heart held high,
Taking his chances as they came round,
And now he's lying between the lines,
And his blood drops red on the reeking ground;
He prays for the greatest gift of the gods,
The touch of death that will end his pain,
Then sleep steals down on his weary eyes,
And his soul is back in the North again.

He feels the fang of the frost in his flesh
As it stabs through the parka's fold,
And the scorch of the storm-whirl sears his
cheek,

BILL

With the touch of its biting cold ;
He hears the crunch of the wind-packed snow
As it grinds 'neath the snow-shoes' tail,
And he knows he is back in the North again,
At the start of another trail.

Back to the land where he'd fought, and failed,
And risen to fight again,
Fought and fallen, but battled on,
In the strength of his sweat and pain ;
Broken and beaten, but undismayed,
Fighting the fight to the last,
One lone man 'gainst the lone wolf-land,
Braving the biting blast.

Daring the devils that ride the storm,
The fiends that reive in the snow,
Going gay to the jaws of death,
As only the brave may go,
Hurling a taunt in the wolf-land's eyes,
Laughing in death's dark face,
A lonely atom that takes its stand
In the midst of infinite space.

Back in the grey old North again,
With the flat snow stretching wide,

BILL

Back in the land of the stunted pines,
Where the wolf and the Husky bide,
Back where the Frost King's grip is strong,
And the winds, his courtiers, race,
Back where men rattle the dice with fate
And gamble for gold or a grave.

Then the flame of the past leaped through his
blood,
Like the flame of a sacred fire,
And the wail of the wind was a welcome home,
To the land of his heart's desire,
The Huskies howled in the driving storm
And the howl of the wolves replied,
From the shadowed thickets of stunted pine
That blackened the mountain side.

Then mush, you sore-footed brutes, mush on,—
The tugging malamutes strain the trace,
And the whip's sharp snap is the crack of doom
As it rings and echoes through silent space;
The coarse snow shrieks 'neath the speeding sled,
And heading into the rising gale,
Strong in the strength of his heart and hands,
He's mushing off on his last long trail.

BILL

Bill, the Bomber came back to the trench,
A mud-stained tunic over his face,
By the light of the first faint flush of dawn
They dug him a shallow resting-place;
They looked at the wounds where his life leaked
out,
And their oaths held more than a hint of
prayer,
For they knew that he'd suffered the pains of hell,
Waiting for death in the darkness there.

Then they bared his face for a last good-bye,
Ere they laid him down on his couch of clay,
And he seemed to sleep, as a man may sleep
At the end of a long and weary day;
Never a mark on his face to tell
Of the age-long hours of a night of pain,
But the smile of a man, who, the long trail past,
Is come to the home of his heart again.

YPRES

Grim and grey 'neath the brooding stars
Thy shell-torn ruins lie,
And the fire-scarred stubs of thy once proud
towers
Strain to the pitying sky,
Like twisted and tortured hands that reach
To the foot of the throne on high,

And plead for a vengeance swift and sure
On the foe who has done thee wrong,
Who gave a peaceful town to the sword,
Claiming the right of the strong —
A little patience, oh, tortured town,
For vengeance is thine ere long.

Already the armies that stand for the right
Are hard on the heels of the Hun,
And the dark of defeat draws near to them
Who sought a place in the sun,
And the nation that drank to "The Day," with
cheers,
Will mourn ere the day be done.

YPRES

Battered and burnt are the pleasant homes
That stood by thy eastern gate,
Ruined and ravished the lordly Hall
Where thy merchants have sat in state,
Great is thy sorrow, and great thy loss,
But thy honour is still more great.

Though thy glory be dim with the dust of death
And thy beauty in ruin falls,
Honoured art thou above all the towns
In the dead that died by thy walls,
And thy honour's stars are the graves that lie,
In the shade of thy shattered halls.

Gay and gallant they fought their fight
And lightly they laid them down,
On the blood-stained banks of thy old canal
And the steel-swept streets of the town,
Flooding the earth with their hero's blood
And thy name with their fair renown.

So, hail to thee! city of shroudless ghosts,
And hail to the noble dead,
Who laid them down in their last long sleep,
With thy stony streets for a bed,
And gave their lives that the world might live,
When thy old canal ran red.

YPRES

Strong in sorrow and proud in death,
 Thou shalt stand through the long, long years,
A monument to a whole world's woe,
 To a nation's blood and her tears,
To the men that looked death fair in the face,
 Untroubled by craven fears.

And thy ravished ruins shall be a sign
 Till the set of the last red sun,
A warning grim, as thy fate was grim,
 That men may read as they run,
“Heed ye the fate of the little lands
 That trust in the word of the Hun.”

RESPONSIBILITY

There was a man in Birmingham who couldn't
go and fight,
His heart was pretty shaky and his lungs were
far from right,

Too weak to make a soldier — this is how the
story runs —

He got a job a-making ammunition for the guns.
And shut up in a factory, ten hours a day or more,
He made the little cartridges that fit the rifle-bore,
Although he worked to beat the Dutch his conscience
wasn't right,
And he worried like blue blazes 'cause he couldn't
go and fight.

There was an army-service man, who dished out
clothes and shoes,
MacConachies and bully-beef, and bread and
cheese and booze ;
He got a special army form demanding bread
and beans
And half a million other things, for some bunch
near Messines.

RESPONSIBILITY

It was an extra special case so, with no time to
waste,
He turned a bunch of wagons out and loaded up
in haste;
And, somehow, working at high speed and rushed
to beat the band,
Put on an extra jar of rum that wasn't "on
demand."

There was a Sergeant-Major, and a cheerful soul
was he,
He saw that extra jar of rum and chortled in his
glee;
Says he, "I guess the boys are cold, a-standin'
in the rain,
A double dose will warm 'em up and set 'em right
again."
Then he rambled down the trenches, through mud
and dark and wet,
And handed out a man-sized jolt to every man
he met,—
Although we sometimes bawl at him and often
cuss him some,
We love the Sergeant-Major when he dishes
out the rum.

RESPONSIBILITY

There was a private down the trench, a-doing of
his guard,
All wet and cold and mis'erable and up against it
hard,
The world seemed full of grief and gloom, with
ne'er a guiding star,
When the Sergeant-Major hove in sight a-carry-
ing his jar.
His soul was full of perfect peace, the whole
world was his friend,
As half a pint of Army rum went scorching
round the bend;
So, joying in the welcome heat of the internal
glow,
He cared not for the rain above or for the mud
below.

Beneath the soothing influence was born a pious
thought,
From out the misty memories of things that he'd
been taught,
"Cast your bread upon the waters," that is what
the Scripture tells,
"I guess I'll let 'em have ten rounds, on general
principELS."

RESPONSIBILITY

So, working his Lee-Enfield, just as fast as she
could bark,
He sent his ten rounds rapid out into the silent
dark,
And, though he didn't know it then, and didn't
give a damn,
The cartridges he rattled off were made in
Birmingham.

There was a German General doped out a lovely
scheme,
Considered as pure strategy it was a perfect
dream;
He had an awful bunch of men all ready for the
scrap
And figured that he'd wipe the British Army off
the map.
With his Staff all gathered 'round him, in his
camp behind the line,
He laid his scheme before them and it sounded
mighty fine,
But just before he reached the point on which
the whole thing hung,
A-sailing handsome, high and wide, a random
bullet sung.

RESPONSIBILITY

The gold-laced Staff stood round and gaped, in
horror and surprise,
The General curled up on the floor, a hole between
his eyes;
The golden dream of conquest had been shattered
with a slam,
By a rambling, stray, old bullet that was made
in Birmingham.
And through that hole between his eyes their
highest hopes had fled,
The scheme was locked up in his brain — what
use, when he was dead?
His great plan may have been a peach, or may
have been a quince,
But they didn't break the line that night, and
haven't done it since.

This is a simple little tale, but tell me, friend o'
mine,
Who was it wiped that General out, and, maybe,
saved the line?
Was it the Private, half-way soused, who let his
ten rounds hum,
Or, perhaps, the Sergeant-Major, who had given
him the rum?

RESPONSIBILITY

Was it the Army-Service man, who didn't count
things right,

Or that poor guy in Birmingham, who couldn't go
and fight?

Such questions aren't much in my line, so I've
no answer pat,

I'll let you work it out yourself and "let it go
at that."

NO MAN'S LAND

In the sunny South and the naked North
The old wise East and the younger West,
Poets have lived and songs sent forth
Lauding the land that they held the best.
Dante has written of Heaven and Hell,
Of souls in torment and angel band,
What of the land where no man may dwell?
Who writes the ballad of No Man's Land?

Grim and gaunt in the morning's grey
Barren and bare in the noon-day's light,
Livid and lone when the star-shells play,
A deadly desert through day and night.
'Neath the Maxim's hail and the shrapnel's sweep
Who may cross it and hope to stand?
And, who is there who holds life so cheap
As the men who wander in No Man's Land?

Narrow kingdom of dread and fear
Where Death Omnipotent holds his sway,
From the Northern Sea to the South frontier

NO MAN'S LAND

Lie heaps of clothing and mouldering clay.
All that is left of the men who died
In the dark alone, that the men who stand
On guard, in the trenches that wander wide,
May rule the Kingdom of No Man's Land.

Many a man goes gay to death
In the rush and riot of charging men,
When high hearts leap to the deep-drawn breath,
Who cares for bullet or bayonet then?
But the man must be made in a hero's mould
Who dares to wander with life in hand,
Where the shadow of Death's dark wings enfold
The fatal field that is No Man's Land.

Many a gallant life has fled,
To the bursting bomb and the bayonet's thrust,
And the grey rats feast on the year-old dead,
In the slimy mud and the poisoned dust.
In death and decay they lie supine,
Where never a tree or a house may stand,
Who would win the day on the Western line,
Must pay the price out in No Man's Land.

Sing of your heroes of golden lands,
Men of Carthage and Greece and Rome,

NO MAN'S LAND

Of Nelson and Drake and their hero bands
Sailor Sons of our Island Home.
Who ruled the earth and who dared the deep,
With hero heart and unfaltering hand,
Have they more honor than those who sleep
The last long sleep out in No Man's Land?

L'ENVOI

Who is the man with the poet's soul,
The soldier's eye and the craftsman's hand,
Who will worthily carve on Fame's fair scroll
The deathless epic of No Man's Land?

OVER THE WALL

The shells are screaming over our heads,
And the guns are roaring to beat the band,
They're having a merry hell of a time
On the other border of No Man's Land;
But through the rush and the roar and the reek
A message drops on the waiting ear,
And the shrieking shrapnel and roaring guns
Brings tidings of comfort and hearty cheer.
"Look to your bayonet and see to your bombs,
Be sure that your rifle is working right,
We've lain in the mud for a long, long while,
But we're going over the wall to-night."

The parapet's smashed to a shapeless mass,
And the wire is hanging in tattered strings,
The guns have the range to a split frog's hair,
And they sure are making a mess of things,
The sandbags soar like the mounting lark,
And the armoured dug-outs are pounded flat,

OVER THE WALL

That shattered wood was a gun-base once,
But the nine point twos put an end to that.
Just let the artillery clear the way,
You can bet your boots that they'll do it right,
There'll be mighty little to hold us up,
When we go over the wall to-night.

Eighteen pounder and nine point two;
Fifteen inch and seventy-five,
Paving the path where the bayonets go,
Blazing the trail for another drive.
The shrapnel drips like a driving rain,
The H. E.'s batter at every bay,
And Fritz is down in his dug-outs deep,
Thirty feet in the stubborn clay.
Dig your deepest and burrow your best,
We'll dig you out with the bayonet bright,
You'll find six fathoms is none too deep,
When we go over the wall to-night.

The Sergeant-Major's round with the rum —
The bombers are loosening up their pins,
The Captain's got his eye on his watch,
Two minutes more and the show begins.
Brace your feet on the firing step,
Ready to jump when the whistles blow,

OVER THE WALL

Think of the weary months in the mud,
Of the boys "gone West" that we used to
know.

We've quite a score to settle with Fritz,
But we'll pay up our debts in full, and write
"Paid" at the foot of the long account,
When we go over the wall to-night.

The Captain's whistle's between his teeth
And the guns lift on to the second line;
The whistle shrieks and away we go,
'Cross the narrow strip where the bullets whine,
Splashing thro' cess-pools of stinking slime,
Stumbling through mud that is foul and deep,
Over that shell-pocked No Man's Land,
As wolves swoop down on the cowering sheep.
The shrapnel's tearing gaps in the ranks,
Lines wither away in the Maxim's blast,
But who cares a curse for his life to-night?
We're over the wall and away at last.

Through the wire and down the trench,
Stab and batter and shoot and thrust,
Bomb and bayonet and rifle clubbed,
Berserk mad with the battle lust.
There's a few more acres of France set free,

OVER THE WALL

At the point of the bayonet we've pushed the
line

A few yards further along the way —

The long red road to the rolling Rhine.

We've given the Kaiser another push,

To help him along to his final fall,

And freedom and peace drew a step more near,

When the boys were up and over the wall.

MUD

Arms and the mud I sing,— the mud we find
To right and left, before us and behind,
Inside our boots, our clothes, our eyes, our ears,
In everything we own of every kind.

We're getting used to Fritz's little game,
We don't find things as bad as when we came,
The shelling doesn't bother us so much,
But mud is everlastingly the same.

The parapet we build so tall and straight,
What time the engineers stood by in state
And told us just exactly what to do,
Must be rebuilt to-morrow,— ain't it great?

No shells have ever landed on it yet,
Nor did a "sausage" cause this blamed upset,
It just lay down under the pressure of
The blasted mud, a-swelling in the wet.

MUD

We load it into bags whereof we make
A place to sleep, but find, when we awake,
The dug-out that we toiled on has become
A muddy island in a muddier lake.

They tell us we must stick it when the Hun
Comes swarming through the wire — easy done,
If you're bogged down in Flanders to your waist
You've got to stick it — you're too deep to run.

Of gallant charges poets used to sing,
Of dashes into death while bugles ring,
Shoulder to shoulder, bayonets gleaming bright,
But charging through the mud's a different thing.

Of course, we sometimes go to see the Hun,
But then we slide and slither — never run.
How can you run with mud above your knees?
The glory of the charge is overdone.

It's spread upon the biscuit that we eat,
The same old mud that squelches 'neath our
feet,
It thickens up our soup, sweetens our tea,
And in our stew it mingles with the meat.

MUD

It has a few good points when all is said,
It makes a soft, though somewhat slimy, bed,
And, covered with a bag or two, it makes
A downy pillow for a weary head.

Oh, Mud! Mud! Mud! Must raiment, food and
bed
Be full of thee? Sleeping and clothed and fed
Must you be always with us and, at last,
Must we be buried in you when we're dead?

Remember Belgium! Shall we soon forget
The land that stays so beautifully wet?
They told us 'twould dry up when spring came
round,
'Tis August, and the mud is with us yet.

But still 'tis not much use to raise a fuss,
And when we feel inclined to rave or cuss,
We find some consolation in the thought
That Fritz is getting it as bad as us.

MATHEMATICS

There was a time when I believed that maps
Were harmless products of the draughtsmen's
art,

And figured, like a lot of other chaps,
That maps and wars were many miles apart.
I've learnt to trail a contour to its lair
And how to tell a valley from a hill,
To scale the measured miles from here to there,
To trace the windings of a pictured rill;
I've learnt the signs for everything, from wells
to railway stations,
I've even learnt to calculate magnetic variations.

Now there's a pin-prick on a German map,
(A mark upon a map I've never seen)
Made by some goggle-eyed professor chap,
All toggled up in a suit of greyish-green,
Who's skipper of a bag of tricks that looks
Like a machine-shop, but is just a gun
Manned by a lot of guys that study books
And gather round and have a lot of fun,

MATHEMATICS

With gears and shafts and steering wheels and
other mechanisms,
Professors of a dozen sorts and half a hundred
“isms.”

Of course, they're quite a piece away from me,
(A range of hills and lots of air between)
I've never seen, nor ever hope to see,
Those scientific chaps in greyish-green.
But, still, I've got a hunch that there's a prick
Upon their map that shows just where I lie,
And some day they'll cut loose and turn the trick
And we'll go soaring, piecemeal, to the sky.
Knowing they've marked upon their map exactly
your location,
Doesn't encourage quiet thought or peaceful
meditation.

A scientific gent that soars on wings
Among the fleecy clouds that float on high,
With telescope and other useful things,
Locates us as he rambles through the sky ;
He telephones down to another Hun,
Letters and figures in a formless group,
Which the receiver notes, and when he's done
They've got us very nicely in the soup.

MATHEMATICS

That tangled bunch of figures is the sign of our
undoing,
They plot them nicely on their map and calmly
leave us stewing,—

Until the skipper of that bag of tricks
Says to his junior, standing next in line —
“ Those fellows at O.K. 4-9-3-6 —
“ I’ve got their angles figured pretty fine,
“ Suppose we let them have a round or so.”
They get their little toy all loaded up
With dopes, whose names I never hope to know,
Packed in an envelope designed by Krupp,
And having set their wheels and things with care
and circumspection,
They loose a ton of concentrated hell in our
direction.

Then, if their calculations have been true
And accurately drawn their curves and lines,
If no one’s dropped a decimal or two,
In calculating tangents, squares and sines;
Why, then, the steel-cased lump of sudden death
Will follow up the line laid down for it,
Nor vary by a single whisker’s breadth,
Until it hits where it’s supposed to hit;

MATHEMATICS

That is where Fritz's pin-prick shows our
situation,
And we're wiped out by trigonometry, to Fritz's
keen elation.

Give us again the good old days now dead,
When hand to hand you faced the other dub
And bounced a granite boulder off his head,
Or re-arranged his features with a club.
Those were the good old days. Just now, alas!
A Hun professor in a grey-green dress
(Who taught before the war an infant class)
Can drop Krupp's greetings right at your address.
From all this mess of useless words stands forth
one truth terrific,
They've spoiled this war by making it so blasted
scientific.

REFLECTIONS OF A TOMMY

They say there's dignity and peace in death.
There may be, sometimes, mostly though, there's
not.

We see so many fellows draw their breath
For the last time, in this confounded spot,
We don't pay much attention to it now,
Or moralize about Death's healing hand
Laid softly on the sufferer's fevered brow
To ease his pain. 'Tis hard to understand.

You know Old Bill? We laid Old Bill away
A little while ago. I dug his hole —
(It sure was dirty digging — sticky clay)
And tried to say a prayer for Old Bill's soul.
And then it struck me — all the poets gush
About the peaceful sleep of death, and tell
Of the calm, happy smiles, and such like slush,
Of men who die for freedom, but, O! Hell!
Just take a look at Bill; does his face show
The hand of peace — mark of a soul set free?
Or, don't you think that anyone would know,
Just looking at him, what he used to be?

REFLECTIONS OF A TOMMY

I took the blanket off his face to see
If Death had clothed him in a robe of grace;
No, there he lay, just as he used to be,
The same unlovely, weakling, shiftless face.
(A little froth of blood upon his lips,
And eyes, half glazed, and staring straight ahead,
Dull with the dulness of his life's eclipse.)
What sign of peace lies in those eyes so dead,
Or rest, or honour, on that mouth so weak?
His eyes give him away, his cold lips tell,
Plainly as if in death they still could speak,
Just what he was — a man that failed and fell.
The kind that keeps our prisons always filled,
That lengthens out our bread-line every year —
A weakling, wastrel; hope and honour killed
Not much nobility in Bill, I fear.

But, then on second thought, there's something
there —

Hardly the stamp of noble death, but still
A look that Bill, in life, could never wear.
Now he's gone West it's possible that Bill
Knows things that he could never hope to know.
And sees more clearly now than we can see.
Of course, that's just a hunch — it may be so,
Or it may not, and yet, it seems to me

REFLECTIONS OF A TOMMY

There's something in Bill's face that seems to
say —

“ You called me jail-bird, crook and other things,

“ You thought I was a slum-rat yesterday,

“ And you a plaster saint with snowy wings,

“ Because you had the chance I never had.

“ But now I know, and some day you'll know,
too,

“ That no man is all good, and none all bad ;

“ Now lying here, I'm just as good as you.

“ I gave my life — 'twas all I had to give —”

(A man has just one life, whoe'er he be)

“ That men at home might sleep in peace, and
live ;

“ Is one of them a better man than me? ”

I may be wrong ; perhaps it's just a whim

Of light and shadow makes him look that way,

But, it sure struck me, when I looked at him,

That if Bill had a message, 'twas to say,

Something like this : “ A rogue dead in this fight

“ Does more for right than any saint that stays
away

“ And skulks at home.” I think that Bill is right.

MUSIC

I was fooling around in a muddy trench, doing
a guard one night,
'Twas black as the boots of the Earl of Hell —
the wind was a holy fright;
The cold was the kind that just sapped your bones,
the rain was a solid sheet,
And I hugged the lee of a traverse there, hunt-
ing a little heat.

Someone, a little way down the ditch, was playing
a violin
And the notes came down on the biting wind,
eerie and weird and thin,
Then, huddled up in the cold and rain, as limp
as an empty sack,
My soul got away from a world of war, and my
mind went a-beating back,

Over the long, long trail of Time, to a night so
long ago,

MUSIC

When, snug and warm in a log-built shack, we
 basked in the birch logs' glow;
When Jacques Du Bois, on his violin, played the
 chansons of ancient France,
And Bill La Belle, on the split-log floor, danced
 us the Beggar's Dance,

That he'd learned in the days when he traded
 North, many a year ago,
And the storm wind howled round the moss-
 chinked logs, and the claws of the driven
 snow
Tore at the windows and shook the roof and
 rattled the close-barred door,
And we cheered old Bill till the shingles shook,
 and shouted and yelled for more.

Then we dragged Big Russian Mike from his
 bunk, a-cussin' to beat the band,
To show how the fur-capped Cossacks danced on
 the steppes of his native land.
Thirty below in the storm outside, but cosy and
 warm within,
And the storm fiends howling a chorus deep to
 Du Bois's old violin.

MUSIC

He stopped. I guess for a little while he was figuring what he'd play,
And, as he groped in his brain's back room to dig up another lay,
He kept on drawing out broken chords, without any settled scheme,
Wild' as the wail of a lone, lost soul — and then in a kind of dream

I saw the camp of the Sitka Crees, on the edge of the Barren Lands,
In the year when the salmon came not at all and the errant and drifting bands
Of caribou (they must hunt or starve) swung east of their well-trod trail,
So the hunters crawled empty-handed home, and famine, a spectre pale,

Stalked, grim and gaunt, through the famished camp and struck with a heavy hand,
Till women and weaklings failed like flies and the strongest, who still could stand,
Scratched with their knives in the frost-gripped ground, piling up cairns of stones,
O'er the dead they laid in their shallow graves to cheat the wolves of the bones.

MUSIC

And the broken chords, on the biting wind, were
the wails of the women when

They mourn for those who have hit the trail to
the Hills of the Mighty Men.

Then he started into a tune that told of women,
and song, and wine,

And I visioned Tony the Wop's old dump, up
back of the Forty-Nine,

When old Sawn-soo and Dan McKay and Little
Pete Dawe and me,

Came mushing down from Muskaga Creek on a
hell of a jamboree.

Money to burn in our pokes that night, and never
a care at all,

And we cut things loose to a queen's sweet taste
in Tony the Wop's old hall.

Hooch a-plenty and dances free, and all the games
thrown wide,

'Til Dan ran foul of a tin-horn sport, who'd just
got in from outside ;

A couple of words and their guns were out — you
know the way these things start —

And Dan lay sprawled on the dance-house floor,
a bullet plumb thro' his heart.

MUSIC

He kept on playing 'bout all he knew — music of
every kind —

And every tune brought a picture clear of some-
thing I'd left behind —

Something I'd known in the good old days, in
the lands that are wild and free,
(Lonely and hungry and naked lands, but they
sure look like home to me)

And when my relief got around at last, I lay in
my muddy bed

And dreamed of forests of gloomy pine, of snows
that are drear and dead,

Of camp-fires dotting the night like stars, of stars
that are bright like fire,

Of mountains rising to meet the stars, higher
and ever higher;

Of the old lost trails and the old lost life, of the
lands that I used to know,

Mountain and forest and frozen stream, tundra
and swamp and snow.

I don't know whether that guy could play, 'cos
violin stuff, you see,

Is one of the thirteen million things that don't
mean a thing to me,

MUSIC

But it seems to me, many years ago, that I heard
quite a lengthy speil,

By some wise old guy, that Music's *good* if only it
makes you *feel*.

If Music is good when it makes you feel that
fellow's was good all right,

For the sounds that he sawed from his creak-
ing strings made me homesick as hell that
night.

THE WANDERING MEN

There's a breed of men — a wandering breed —
they're drifting everywhere,
Nobody knows just who they are, or whence they
came, or why,
A breed who'll tackle any game, and always play
it square,
Who'll drink or fight, or maybe kill, but seldom
cheat or lie,
Unless it be to help a pal — they're far from be-
ing saints,
They live their lives to suit themselves, fearless
and free and fast,
Unchecked by any church's code, by any law's re-
straints,
They seek what joy there is in life, as long as life
may last.

You used to meet them everywhere, where life
ran swift and strong,
Where the wild land makes its final stand, ere
yet it's beaten back,

THE WANDERING MEN

Where the city crowds the desert, where the trails
are lone and long,
The wandering men whose feet are free and scorn
the trodden track.
The lone trails know their feet no more — no
more their camp-fires glow,
Like fire-flies in the velvet dark, or hail the coming day,
Their feet are now on harder trails, the trails
that soldiers know,
And many sleep their last long sleep, 'neath
France's sodden clay.

They were men whose lives would not conform
to standards churchmen set,
They fell for cards, for rattling dice, for women
fair and frail,
They dearly loved to gaze upon the whiskey
when 'twas wet,
And their feet slipped far and frequent from the
straight and narrow trail.
They often got too hot to hold and sadly out of
hand,
They loved to cut things loose, to fight and frolic
now and then :

THE WANDERING MEN

They'd be 'way out of the picture in a white-robed
angel band,
But they stacked up good and proper in our com-
mon world of men.

There are some whose souls went soaring to the
high explosive's crash,
There are some whose lives leaked redly through
the hole the bayonet made,
Bursting bomb and whining bullet and the shrap-
nel's sear and smash,
Sent some to answer roll-call at the Great O. C.'s
Parade.
Though their lives were far from saintly, yet they
died as brave men die,
Without regret for days gone by or fear for days
in store,
They went to death as to a feast, with heart and
head held high,
They played the game for all 'twas worth and
what can man do more?

All through the war-reaped fields of France, their
unmarked graves abound,
They sleep the deep and dreamless sleep of men
whose toil is past,

THE WANDERING MEN

Till the trumpeter of Heaven on the trump of
doom shall sound

The call to that court-martial that all men must
face at last.

Shall they fear that great court-martial, who
knew not the name of fear?

Shall they merit deep damnation for their lives
lived fast and free?

Shall not life, laid down for freedom, pay for
every wasted year,

And their long account be cancelled, by the lives
they gave in fee?

So when the Provost-Marshall lays their crime-
sheet on the board,

(The long, long list of lusty years, when life was
swift and strong,

With many a duty left undone and many a law
ignored)

And the wandering men of little worth stand
forth a goodly throng,

With their clothes all torn in battle and their
scars of honour red,

Shall they be judged by churchmen's laws or by
the laws that stand above

THE WANDERING MEN

The little laws that churchmen make — the laws
of Him who said,
“Who gives his life that man may live, no man
has greater love.”

PAY DAY

There was Rod O'Shea, and Micky Walsh, and
Tillicum McGhee,
And Big Bill Black, and Shorty Jones, and
Jimmy Noyes, and me —
We drew our pay and started out upon a little
spree.

We didn't buy no motor cars, or yachts, or dia-
mond rings,
(When you're a-soldiering out here you don't re-
quire such things)
But with our fifteen francs apiece we felt as rich
as kings.

Our real needs were only two — I don't know
which was worst —
Our longing for some real grub or our unholy
thirst;
Estaminets weren't open, so we killed our hunger
first.

PAY DAY

We had a reg'lar soldier's spread — a bunch of
hen-fruit fried,
Some chipped-up Murphies cooked in grease, with
coffee on the side,
Some stuff that they call custard here, and we
were satisfied.

And then we hunted up a place where they sell
liquid stuff,
You can't get any "hooch" out here, which sure
is mighty tough —
And so we had to make beer do, and beer was
quite enough.

It was an old estaminet, two miles behind the line,
Where they sell stout and "Beer Anglais" and
vinegar called wine;
We mopped up quite a lot of each and got to
feelin' fine.

There was soldiers there of every kind the world
has ever seen,
Artillery, and horse, and foot — yes, even a
marine,
And then we got to tellin' tales — you know the
kind I mean.

PAY DAY

O'Shea he told of crocodiles, and ninety-nine foot
snakes,
While Jimmy Noyes was lyin' 'bout the dams the
beaver makes,
And how he uses his flat tail to hammer down
his stakes.

There was a flame-topped Irishman (his pals all
called him Pat)
Says he — "I've seen a beaver and it's just a
swelled-up rat,
With a tail that's far too big for him and pounded
kind of flat."

We wear a Beaver on our caps upon a maple leaf,
So we couldn't stand such statements from a red-
haired cattle-thief:
We looked at one another, more in anger than
in grief.

'Twas Big Bill took the challenge up and rose
up in his might,
He landed on the red-haired mut — and landed
on him right,
And that was the commencement of a very pretty
fight.

PAY DAY

There, where the dove of peace had perched, the
air was stiff with strife,
Formalities were cast aside and war was to the
knife;
I've never struck a sweeter scrap in all my mis-
spent life.

It was a peach — I saw Big Bill backed up against
the door,
Doing Horatius at the Bridge, and, tangled on
the floor,
A ball of concentrated strife with Jimmy for the
core.

Fists, bottles, jugs and table-legs were mussing
up the air,
And missiles, mixed with wicked words, were
flying here and there,
And — someone laid out Micky with the ruins of
a chair.

Big Bill was next to bite the dust, he got it good
and hard,
(An upper-cut that jarred his spine and lifted
him a yard),
Bill always was a careless cuss about his bloomin'
guard.

PAY DAY

Right then things happened with such speed
they're hard to tell about —
Someone got jugglin' with a jug that had been
full of stout,
And Jimmy Noyes was in the way — they
counted Jimmy out.

Some careless person, fooling with a bottle, let
it fly,
It landed with a sickly thud upon my dexter eye,
And I went peacefully to sleep and let the world
slip by.

I can't say just what happened next — I wasn't
in the game,
But, from the tales I've heard, I judge that things
were far from tame,
And everyone enjoyed himself until the piquet
came.

Now Rod O'Shea, and Micky Walsh, and Tilli-
cum McGhee,
And Big Bill Black, and Shorty Jones, and
Jimmy Noyes, and me,
Are doing twenty-eight long days on number
one F. P.

PAY DAY

They've moved our leave back just six months,
that means that we'll get none,
Until old Fritz is flattened out and this darned
war is done,
But — though we're paying for it now — we sure
had lots of fun.

DAWN — APRIL 9th, 1917

Not yet Dawn — and the gray mists lie
Thick on the Ridge ahead.
Here and there, like a lightning flash,
Blazons a burst of red
Through the dark that lies on a storm-swept
world — heavy and cold as lead.

Not yet dawn — and the storm-whirls sweep
Over a world a-strain —
The men of the Youngest Nation wait —
Out in the dark and rain,
Ready to die that a world may live —
Reckoning death as gain.

There, in the black of the storm-swept dark,
Men of the Western Lands
Strain their eyes where a darker shape
Shows where the grim Ridge stands —
Kultur's stronghold for two long years —
Boast of the Kaiser's bands.

DAWN — APRIL 9th, 1917

Gunners stand in their deep-dug pits,
Hard by their high-piled shells —
Guns all trained on the Ridge's slope —
There where the Hun horde dwells —
Waiting to loose on the German line
Flames of a hundred hells.

Seconds dragging with leaden feet —
Minutes as long as days —
Faint gray streaks in the eastern sky,
Piercing the heavy haze —
When, oh, when, will the minute strike?
When will the great guns blaze?

When, oh, when, will the minute strike?
Dawn's creeping up so fast —
When — in the crash of a riven world
Waiting is done at last —
Gone are the doubts, and the hopes, and fears,
Now that the vigil's past.

Guns a-bark like the hounds of hell!
Guns that but now were dumb,
Bellow deep in their iron throats
Now that their hour has come,
And their song to some is a hymn of joy —
Music of death to some.

DAWN — APRIL 9th, 1917

Through the dusk and the driving sleet,
 Out through the steel-shod rain,
Go the men of the Western Lands,
 Fearing not death nor pain —
Going gaily and caring not
 Who shall come back again.

Where are the Huns who would hold the Ridge,
 Boasting their iron might,
Where are the Legions of Kultur now,
 Faced by the Hosts of Right?
Dead, or captured, or — hero Huns! —
 Scattered in craven flight.

A new flag floats in a freer air,
 High on the Ridge's crown —
A new flag floats o'er the shattered square,
 There in the shell-torn town —
The Flag of Freedom's unfurled again —
 The Eagle of Kultur's down.

Safe they sleep on that barren slope —
 They who went forth and died,

DAWN — APRIL 9th, 1917

To plant the Flag of the Maple Leaf
 High up on the Ridge's side —
And their graves shall be, while the world en-
 dures,
 The shrine of a people's pride.

SHELL-SHOCK

I'm scared, by God! I'm good and scared — my
nerves are all gone smash —
I'm scareder than I ever was before —
An' I'm crouchin' here a-shakin', an' a-waitin' for
the crash
That a coal-box makes a-knockin' at the door.

All my nerves are shot to pieces an' I'm soakin' in
my sweat,
An' my teeth are rattlin' like a box of dice,
All my joints are hangin' loose, an' I'm jumpy
as the deuce,
An' my feet, they feel like fair-sized chunks of
ice.

It feels a most unholy time since first I came out
here,
(The days are lengthy on the Western front),
It feels about a century — it's really just a year,—
Since I started on the "Death or Glory" stunt.

I've seen mighty little Glory an' an awful lot of
Death,

SHELL-SHOCK

But I stuck it out, though often feelin' queer —
Now, I'm crouchin' in a hole, with a chill around
 my soul,
An' I'm pretty nearly fit to faint with fear.

I've took my chances with the rest, there's nothin'
 much in that,—
A risk or two is neither here nor there,—
I've snuggled close to Mother Earth and laid un-
 holy flat
When old Fritz's guns were pounding us for fair.

I've gone across to visit Fritz and thought it lots
 of sport
To mix it good and proper with the Hun,
Now my nerves are shot to strings, an' I'm almost
 seein' things,
An' I'd give my soul if I could cut and run.

I never thought I'd get like this — I thought that
 I could stick,
But they gave us hell in sections all the day,
An' they've got me now — Gott strafe 'em —
 'twas the Heavies did the trick,
(Hear 'em hammer, hammer, hammerin' away).

SHELL-SHOCK

They've polished off our parapet, they've slaughtered all my pals,

An' they've left me here, too sick to even curse,
No, I haven't lost no blood, but I'm lyin' in the mud

With my guts all gone — an' that's a d —— d sight worse.

I wouldn't mind it half so much if I'd been wounded right,

But it's hell to have to quit the game like this,
Scared an' shaken up, an' jumpy — scared of everything in sight,

Almost faintin' when I hear a bullet hiss.

I'll be goin' back to Blighty soon with "Shell-Shock" on my sheet,

An' the boys will think my feet got cold, maybe,
But old Dante could write swell 'bout the agonies of hell

If he'd got a dose of shell-shock, same as me.

THE ONE WAY TRAIL

It's before us in the noonday, with the sunlight
gleaming,— gleaming,—

We can see it in the corpse-light of the green
and ghastly flare,—

In the lonely midnight watches, when the world
lies still and dreaming,

We can watch it winding, winding, winding,
winding, God knows where.

In the crash of war appalling we can hear it call-
ing, calling,

And it lures us —“ Come and follow,” in the song
the bullet sings,

But our feet can never follow till the shades of
death are falling

On the One Way Trail a-leading out unto the
End of Things —

The long, long trail a-leading out unto the End
of Things.

Never glint of sun upon it, nor the moonlight soft
and mellow,

THE ONE WAY TRAIL

Nor the silver sheen of starlight shines upon the
One Way Trail,
But the grimmer lights of battle, bloody red and
leprous yellow,
And the ghastly green of star-shells with their
pallid light and pale,
And the red and wrathful flashes, where the blazing
batt'ry smashes;
The burning towns, like blots of blood, upon the
midnight sky;
The rifle fire that stabs the dark, the thirsty bayonet
flashing,
Are sun and moon and stars to light the trail we
travel by —
And there's light enough to guide us on the trail
we travel by.

Never song of birds upon it, nor the evening
breezes sighing,
Nor the laughter of the waters splashing down
in silver spray,
Breaks the silence of that pathway: but the last
cries of the dying
Telling of a body broken and a spirit sped away:
Mighty guns a-roar like thunder; crash of earth
that's torn asunder;

THE ONE WAY TRAIL

Rifles cracking sharp and sudden, and the rasp
of hard-drawn breath:

These are music meet to cheer us on the Road of
Woe and Wonder,

On the One Way Trail we follow, that men call
the road of Death —

And there's merry, merry music on the One Way
Trail of Death.

Though the way seem dark and dreary, there's
brave company to cheer us —

They who followed, gay and gallant, till the
Trail's end came in sight —

With our feet upon the pathway we can feel them
marching near us —

All the men who fought and suffered in the cause
of Truth and Right;

Men, who, through the march of age — kings
and warriors, priests and sages —

Dared to lay their lives down lightly that earth's
freedom might not fail,

Whose undying names enlighten History's best
and brightest pages —

March beside us through the shadows as we tread
the One Way Trail —

THE ONE WAY TRAIL

And there's gay and gallant company upon the
One Way Trail.

Though the Trail's end may be hidden, and the
shadows hang before it,

Though we see it only darkly, dim and vague, as
in a glass,

Still we're hoping, when we reach it, that the sen-
try posted o'er it

Will believe we did our little best and give us
leave to pass;

Take our bodies, bent and broken, and our death-
wounds as a token

That we fell, but did not falter — that we died,
but did not fail,

And from out the last great silence we may hear
the message spoken —

“There's a welcome at the journey's end for
those who tread the trail —

“And there's rest and peace a-plenty at the end-
ing of the trail.”

A HUNDRED YEARS

You may come through this rather risky game —
(Some fellows do, somehow) —

Unsmashed, unscarred, and generally the same,
In wind and limb, as now.

You may have all the luck, and get away
Without a scratch where fellows every day
Are changed from living men to clammy clay —
But, what's the odds a hundred years from now?

You may — (some fellows do it) — lose a leg;
Maybe an arm, or two;
Crawl through life's journey with a wooden peg,
A wing you never grew.

For, over here, where shrapnel's on the wing,
Where Crumps go crumping and gay bullets sing,
An accident's a mighty common thing —
A hundred years will mend it all for you.

You may, perhaps — (chaps do it every day) —
Acquire an R. I. P.

A HUNDRED YEARS

And, in your little bed down in the clay,
Be beautifully free
From all your cares and sorrows, hopes and fears,
And, though the folks at home may scatter tears,
What will it matter in a hundred years? —
Who's going to care a hang for you or me?

In five score years men will your life and death,
Even your name, forget:
Forget for them you gave your latest breath,
Forget their heavy debt.
Don't let that worry you, but drag along,
Finish your little job of righting wrong
And, though you be forgotten like this song,
Your work will stand still till the last sun has set.

LUCK

One guy went out and did a stunt and gathered a
V. C.,
Another did about the same — and copped an
R. I. P.,
The way that things are divied up looks like a
joke to me.

One chap I knew played “ safety first ” and never
took a chance —
He'd rather an unpunctured hide than glory or
romance —
And now he's pushing daisies up, somewhere in
sunny France.

Another chap — a careless cuss — took chances
as they came,
He looked upon the blessed war as nothing but a
game —
He should be dead a dozen times — he isn't, just
the same.

LUCK

Bill Jones, who easily forgot the little that he
knew,
Holds down a mighty cushy job, draws down a
darned good screw,
And wears red patches on his coat, 'way back at
G. H. Q.

While Smith, who studied twenty years to learn
how wars are run,
Who knows the works of every shell and every
kind of gun,
Will be a simple subaltern until the war is done.

This doesn't prove a single thing, but, after many
days
Of thinking hard, one gleam of fact shines thro'
my mental haze,
And this is it — "the Army moves in most mys-
terious ways."

You may have old Napoleon beat and still stay in
the ruck —
You may acquire an R. I. P., no matter how you
duck —
But D. S. O. or R. I. P. depends a lot on luck.

THE HINDENBURG LINE

Oh, where, oh, where, is the Hindenburg line —
Is it here, or there, or across the Rhine?
We search, but we never find it;
The line that took three long years to make;
The line no troops in the world can take;
The steel and concrete no shells can shake,
And the millions of guns behind it,—

Deep, shell-proof dugouts of steel and brick,
Strong concrete parapets ten feet thick,
Barbed wire beyond all telling;
Where Hans and Fritz and the other folk
In sweet security sit and smoke
And treat the war as a darned good joke
And laugh at our heaviest shelling.

Baupomme, they said, was a piece of it,
Vimy, we heard, was another bit,
And so was Messines, they told us.
And now they say, in a whisper small,
These lines, of which they had talked so tall,

THE HINDENBURG LINE

Are not the Hindenburg line at all,
And never were meant to hold us.

It's really deucedly hard on us
To take a chance on a lot of fuss
And a decent amount of murder,
To take a line that, we have no doubt,
Is Hindy's special — to chase Fritz out,
And hear the journals of Hunland shout
That the Hindenburg line's back further.

A dozen times we've been on its track —
A dozen times it's moved further back —
So we never quite seem to reach it.
Old Hindy's strategy seems, in fine,
To pick up his blooming funny line
And take it with him across the Rhine
So we won't get a chance to breach it.

But some fine morning — (may it be near!)
We'll ramble over the Hun frontier
And see how things look behind it.
By then the line will be rather thin
And travel-stained, but, as sure as sin,
They *can't* go further than old Berlin,
So there we'll be sure to find it.

BALLAD OF BOOZE

Two extracts from Divisional Orders:

(1) Water from these wells to be drunk only after having been chlorinated.

(2) An issue of Petrol tins (empty) has been authorized at the rate of — per Bn. These cans will be used to hold drinking water and will be shown as trench stores.

Bards sing the glory of the grape —
The sun-kissed clusters of the vine —
And claim some god in human shape
Brought down from heaven the gift of wine.
(I'd like to hear their Hymn of Hate
If they but had to sing their song
On luke-warm water taken straight
And chlorinated far too strong.)

Under the feet of maidens fair
Of old, 'tis said, the vintage flowed —
That was the stuff to banish care
And help a man along his road.
(How can a rhymester really rhyme,
Or scribble verses that will scan,

BALLAD OF BOOZE

On water and chloride of lime,
Out of a rusty petrol can?)

Oh, shades of schooners that have sunk
Sailing across the polished bar!
Oh, dreams of all the drinks I've drunk,
Mem'ries of bottle, glass and jar!
Oh, Bacchus, veil thy vine-wreathed brow
And mourn the sorry fate of man:
I'm drinking muddy water now
Out of a rusty petrol can.

But, though the world be dry and sad,
There are some places yet, methinks,
Where priests of Bacchus, linen-clad,
Concoct benign and soothing drinks.
Where men absorb the soothing rye,
Where highballs cheer the heart of man,
And the lone cherry floats on high —
Not in a rusty petrol can.

L'ENVOI

In vain, in vain, the grape may flow
From Leicester Square to Yucatan —
The only vintage that we know
Comes from a rusty petrol can.

A MINOR OPERATION

This is just a little story of a very little mine
That straightened out a little bit of very awkward
line.

The mine went up at four o'clock and that began
the show,
Then the infantry went over, half a thousand
men, or so —
Just the half of one battalion — (t'was a very
small attack),
Went out that misty morning, but very few came
back.
For Fritz was waiting ready and his shells came
thick and fast,
And men went down without a sound before the
shrapnel's blast,
While Maxims from their hidden pits — dug in
on either hand —
Raked with their red-hot rain of death the width
of No Man's Land.

A MINOR OPERATION

So men went down without a sound and lay without a stir ;

At every step the thinning line gapped to the whine and whirr

Of shrapnel, and at every step the Maxims took their toll,

Till, when they reached the muddy pit — the pit that was their goal —

Of all the men that started out across the steel-swept strip

A score were left to take and hold, along the crater's lip.

A half a thousand fighting men at dawn, and now, so soon,

A score of weak and weary men of Number Nine Platoon :

A score of weak and weary men — weary, but full of fight,

With not a chance on earth of help before the fall of night.

One Lewis and a score of men wait, silently and grim,

Ready to hold while one still stands along the crater's rim,

A MINOR OPERATION

So, through the long, long morning shrapnel
barked and screamed and skirled,
And the crash of bursting heavies seemed to shake
the very world,

All through the long, long morning serried waves
of grey-green men
Came surging down upon them, broke, and melted
back again.

All through the long, long morning those behind
the line could tell

That the few who'd reached the crater's rim were
hanging on like hell.

They could hear the rifles cracking, sharp and
sudden, like a whip,

And the rattle of the Lewis, out upon the crater's
lip,

But when the morning drifted on into the after-
noon,

There still were seven weary men of Number
Nine Platoon.

All through the long, long afternoon they held,
and suffered sore —

The grey-green waves came rolling up, and melted
back once more;

A MINOR OPERATION

The shrapnel tore and seared them and the
 heavies racked and rent,
But they hung on, grim and stubborn, weak and
 weary, worn and spent,
But still holding, ever holding, growing weaker,
 but still game;
The grey-green waves broke on them till, at last,
 the darkness came
And reinforcements, creeping up — and not a bit
 too soon —
To help the little that was left of Number Nine
 Platoon,—
Found nineteen men dead — stiff and stark —
 down in the mud, and one
Dying, but with his failing strength gripping a
 Lewis gun.

Just a minor operation that you'd never hear
 about,
But 'twill, maybe, help to show you just how
 MEN can stick it out —
Can go through red hell for hours and get up
 and fight again
While there's one life left amongst them, and then
 die — and die like MEN.

A MINOR OPERATION

Though there isn't any monument to mark their
stubborn stand —
Just a group of wooden crosses in a bare and bar-
ren land —
When they'd got that crater fastened, good and
solid, to the Line,
In the name of those who held it, it was chris-
tened "Number Nine."

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